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Incubate Debate Wraps Up Its Fall Season

BI by Bill of Rights Institute on Dec 10, 2024

The Bill of Rights Institute’s partners at Incubate Debate recently completed their fall debate schedule and are beginning to plan for the new year. Incubate welcomed more than 100 new schools from five states and plans to share the following topics for their upcoming winter tournaments that begin next month:

Incubate was joined this fall by hundreds of students who came together to foster free speech and civil discourse during their 10 tournaments. For many students, like Jaycee Swearingen of Yulee, FL, these tournaments offer a chance for personal growth.

"I couldn’t wait to get in front of the judges and watch my hard work pay off,” she said. “No matter what the outcome of a tournament is, I always leave better than I started, and that’s what I find to be the best part of Incubate."

Wyatt Woodard, a student from Lakeland, FL, said, “I now know how to look at an issue objectively and pursue the truth. I do not take knee-jerk positions to divisive issues, instead taking time to reflect and logically examine both sides. Importantly, I stand up for free speech and ensure that all viewpoints are represented.”

Whether they were first-time competitors or seasoned veterans, every student brought energy and passion to the table. They debated challenging topics like the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban and the use of armed military drones.

Incubate’s tournaments were judged by community members who volunteered their time to support students. More than 75 unique judges joined Incubate this fall — who ranged from lawyers to professors, military personnel to local leaders — and were united by their shared commitment to fairness and promoting open, civil debate.

Every judge swore the Judge Oath, pledging to “judge solely on the clarity, relevance, and strength of the arguments before [them] without fear or favor."

Each judge shares a commitment to fairness and to helping students grow into confident leaders, and Incubate was grateful for their dedication and passion for open debate and civil discourse.

Incubate also recognized their Incubate Fall champions, each of whom received a \$500 scholarship upon their high school graduation alongside their coach, who will receive a reciprocating \$500 cash reward. The list of champions are as follows:

Incubate Northwest:

Debate: Riley Perantoni, Pensacola State Charter Academy

Speaking: Olivia Underwood, Pensacola State Charter Academy

Incubate North Florida College:

Debate: Rodrigo Deleon Ruiz, Allen D. Nease High School

Speaking: Juliana Weldon, Allen D. Nease High School

Incubate Northeast:

Debate: Rodrigo Deleon Ruiz, Allen D. Nease High School

Speaking: Evelynne Graham, First Coast Speech and Debate

Incubate Central:

Debate: Lilly Belle Nimmo, Brandon, FL

Speaking: Diego Alvarez, Wekiva High School

Incubate Atlantic:

Debate: Neil Shroba, Independence Classical Academy

Speaking: Sofia Picanco, Independence Classical Academy

Incubate New College:

Debate: Preston Caylor, Ad Astra Naples Speech and Debate

Incubate Southwest:

Debate: Ana Sofia Valero Mesa, Corkscrew Middle School

Speaking: Priscilla Rodriguez, Immokalee High School

Incubate Southeast:

Debate: Briana Whatley, Miramar High School

Speaking: James Savin, Western High School

Incubate Low Country (South Carolina):

Debate: Mallika Krishna, Hilton Head Island High School

Incubate Los Angeles (California):

Debate: Zaid Khan, Blue Ridge Academy

Visit [this website](#) for information on helping Incubate host more no-cost debate tournaments for middle and high school students. The [Incubate Debate website](#) offers additional information on their upcoming winter tournaments.